

# CATARACT

*and the*

FORKS OF THE CREDIT



*A Pictorial History*



To  
Orangerville Public Library,  
Ralph Beaumont  
June 24/73

by RALPH BEAUMONT

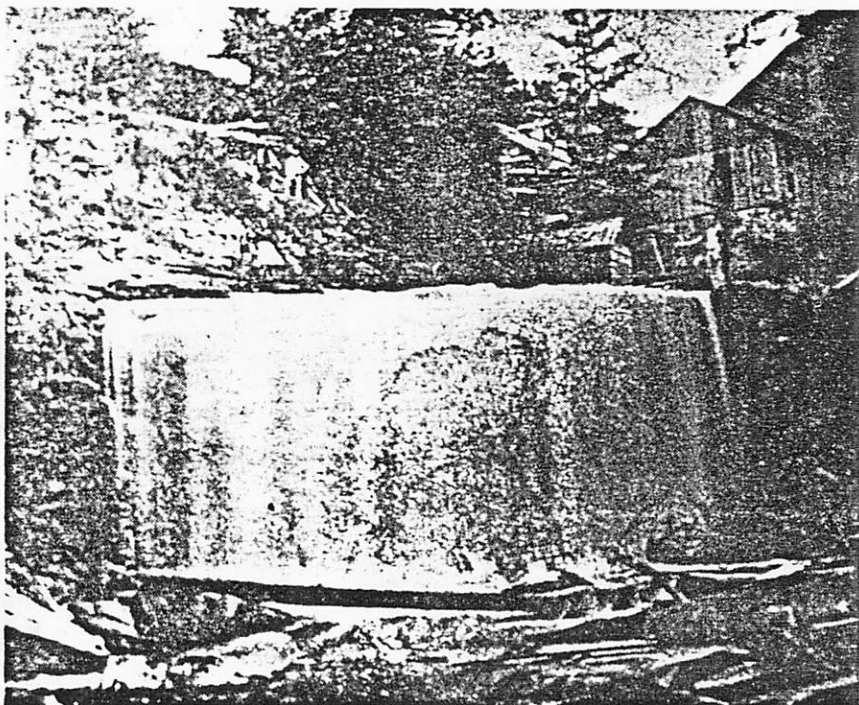
1973

## *Acknowledgements*

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ON THE COVER

THE HORSESHOE INN, CATARACT



Church's Fall's. Circa 1870.

— from the collection of Lloyd Deagle

## *Introduction*

This small booklet is not, nor was it intended to be, a voluminous blow-by-blow account of the Credit Valley's history. Rather, it is a leisurely tale of two sleepy villages nestled within the valley, their rise to prominence at the turn of the century, and the gradual decline that all similar rural settlements have experienced over the past fifty years.

The reasons for choosing Cataract and The Forks of the Credit as subjects of discussion are primarily due to the public interest they have received over the past few years. Being one of the few areas of southern Ontario so richly endowed scenically, and within easy reach of Toronto, the region has become a haven for day-long family outings. The Sunday drivers that line the Forks road in summer, and Bruce Trail hikers who find the Caledon section the most picturesque of the Trail, are all attracted by the prospects of a peaceful trip in the country.

These reaches of the Credit have not always been as calm, quaint and scenic as they are to-day, however. In fact, it may be said that the region is in more of its natural state than it has been for the past 150 years. At one time, Cataract and the Forks were bustling with the activity of mills, quarries, railroads, and the associated towns that supported these networks of industry. All of this is gone, yet the crumbling remains are often discovered by enterprising hikers on their treks through the area. It is the purpose of this booklet, then, to provide these people with some suitable form of information as to the history of the region. Very little has actually been compiled that may assist the casual hiker or historian in this regard, and it is hoped that this detailed, knapsack-size account may be of use on your next excursion to Cataract and the Forks.

## *First Recorded Encounter*

The Indian populations of Canada had long made use of rivers such as the Credit for fishing and transportation purposes, while more than one French fur trader or missionary probably journeyed through Peel County. The first recorded accounts of white contact with the Forks and Cataract falls areas in particular, however, date back to the years of early English settlement.

The United Empire Loyalists had ventured north to seek refuge from the American Revolution, giving the Canadas a much welcomed boost in population. Even so, the settlements in Upper Canada primarily concentrated themselves around Lake Ontario with few extensions inland. Still, an event was to take place in the fall of 1818, one not too dissimilar to that which attracted thousands to California some thirty years later. The cry that gold was to be found in the Caledon hills was heard throughout York, resulting in a party of hardy souls making for the upper reaches of the Credit.

A number of these men died in the snows of 1818, and obviously no gold was found. Yet the first encounter with the area had been established. One of the gold seekers, William Grant by name, did manage to discover a peculiar spring just below the falls at Cataract. It was found that the water ran brackish, attracting deer which would come down the hillside to drink. Salt was of as much value to the early settlers as any gold and it was hoped by Grant that a profit could be made by its sale.

Returning to York, he persuaded Mathew Crooks, his former employer, to finance and accompany an expedition to the falls for the purpose of mining and packaging the salt. The party travelled to the falls in 1820, erected a sawmill at its brink and proceeded to build a village of shacks which they named Gleniffer. An attempt was made at digging, but it was soon found that the salt lay far too deeply into the hillside to be reached with their primitive tools. The project was abandoned, Gleniffer and the ruins of Crook's mill being left in decay for close to 25 years until settlement was again attempted.

## *Village of Cataract*

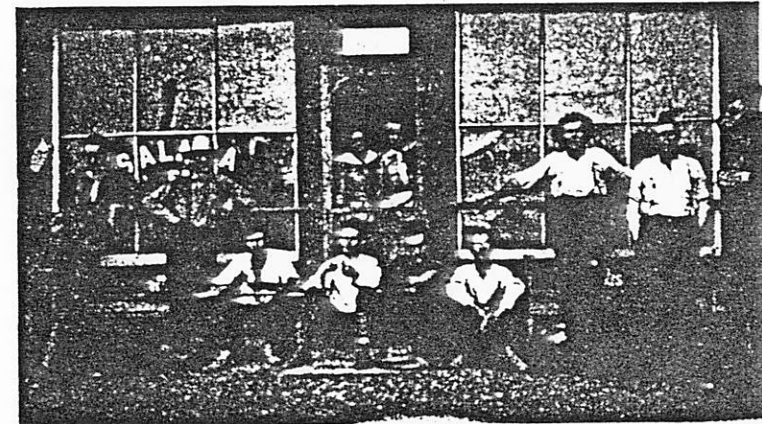
The project that resulted in the permanent settlement of Cataract was one initiated in the early 1850's by Richard Church of Cooksville. Church had previously made his money by buying and subdividing land in that town, but with the filling up of land in the southern reaches of Peel County was forced to look north for further opportunities. The abandoned village of Gleniffer caught his eye,

and with the adequate water supply of the Credit close at hand, lent itself perfectly to development.

Church purchased the townsite for the grand sum of \$100.00 and on his arrival in 1858 christened his new hamlet "Church's Falls". Being one of the earliest land developers in Upper Canada, his plan was to create a self-sufficient community, complete with industry. Over 168 residential lots were surveyed in the bush on both sides of the river, while the lowlands of the Credit itself were zoned for the industry which will be mentioned in detail in the next section of this booklet. In the main town itself an organized, if not overly-extensive, street system was mapped out. Each road bore the name of one of his children, although many of these streets were left in the projected stage and never actually opened.

In 1865, the Cataract Post Office was opened in Church's store, with Church himself as postmaster. He quickly became involved with the industrial aspect of the town and with the marrying of his daughter Mary to a Mr. John Howard, the duties of postmaster were turned over to the latter. Howard later became the village's telegraph and station agent for the Credit Valley Railway. With the opening of the mills, the village expanded to the point where others were able to shake Church's predominance in the town. An indication of his dwindling influence is evident in that with the coming of the railway, the town's name was changed from Church's Falls to Cataract in order to avoid confusion with the village of Churchville to the south.

As the town was a junction of the railway, perhaps its most noteworthy buildings were the hotels. Two major ones existed at the "turn of the century"



—from the collection of Vincent McEnaney

McEnaney's store on Church St., pre-1916.  
Mary and Kate stand in doorway while Pat and Pete are to the right.





— from the collection of Vincent McEnaney

Outside McEnaney's store (now the Horseshoe Inn), 1923. The horse and carriage are gone, but the hotel and house in the background remain.

which made for quite a rivalry. The establishment most familiar to passers-by is the "Horseshoe Inn" which has recently been renovated by its present owners, May and Jack Denreyer. It started its life by housing the first hotel of the village prior to 1870, although no information has been found to date the building exactly. The rowdiest days of the Inn's existence probably occurred while it was under the ownership of Mrs. William Glen, the operation at that time being known as "Glen's Dewdrop Inn". John Deagle, who owned the power plant, often treated the boys to free drinks. A drinking competition usually emerged, but Deagle always seemed to be left standing while the others staggered to the door. Unknown to the participants, Deagle was a teetotaler whose drinks were nothing more than cool tea. This inside joke between Mrs. Glen and Deagle went on for a number of months before it was finally exposed.

Mrs. Glen owned the Inn from the 1880's until 1916 when it was sold to Mary and Kate McEnaney, two sisters of the family to be mentioned shortly. Mary and Kate had previously owned a small store on Church Street but moved the post office and dry goods into the larger structure after the sale. The building was operated as a store for over 30 years but with the death of the sisters, changed hands a number of times before reaching its present owners.

When the Denreyers purchased the structure in 1957, the stable burned and the fine brick building had fallen into decay. Through their hard work, the "Horseshoe Inn" has been renovated to the point where it is the most noted landmark of the town and one of the finest representatives of small-town hotel style that exists in Ontario to-day. Many people continue to enjoy the rooms and home-cooked meals of the Denreyers just as travellers enjoyed similar ones at the same location over 100 years ago.

While the "Horseshoe Inn" enjoys prominence to-day, the "Junction House" was perhaps the better known of the two as far as 19th century travellers were

concerned. Frank McEnaney was proprietor of the hotel, having it constructed of brick and quarried stone in 1890. At its peak, the "Junction House" sported a fine stable as well as a small garden complete with a stone fishpond bearing the McEnaney name on its side. The McEnaneys were Irish immigrants and a mainstay of the town; with Frank being the hotel keeper, the sisters running the store, and the brothers working for the Canadian Pacific Railway. The "Junction House" was always the centre of activity, with railway passengers passing the time at its ample bar in lieu of the depot waiting room. Many a gala party was held at the hotel and many a fight broke up the proceedings, although the participants of the frays usually ended up being dunked in the fishpond by Frank.

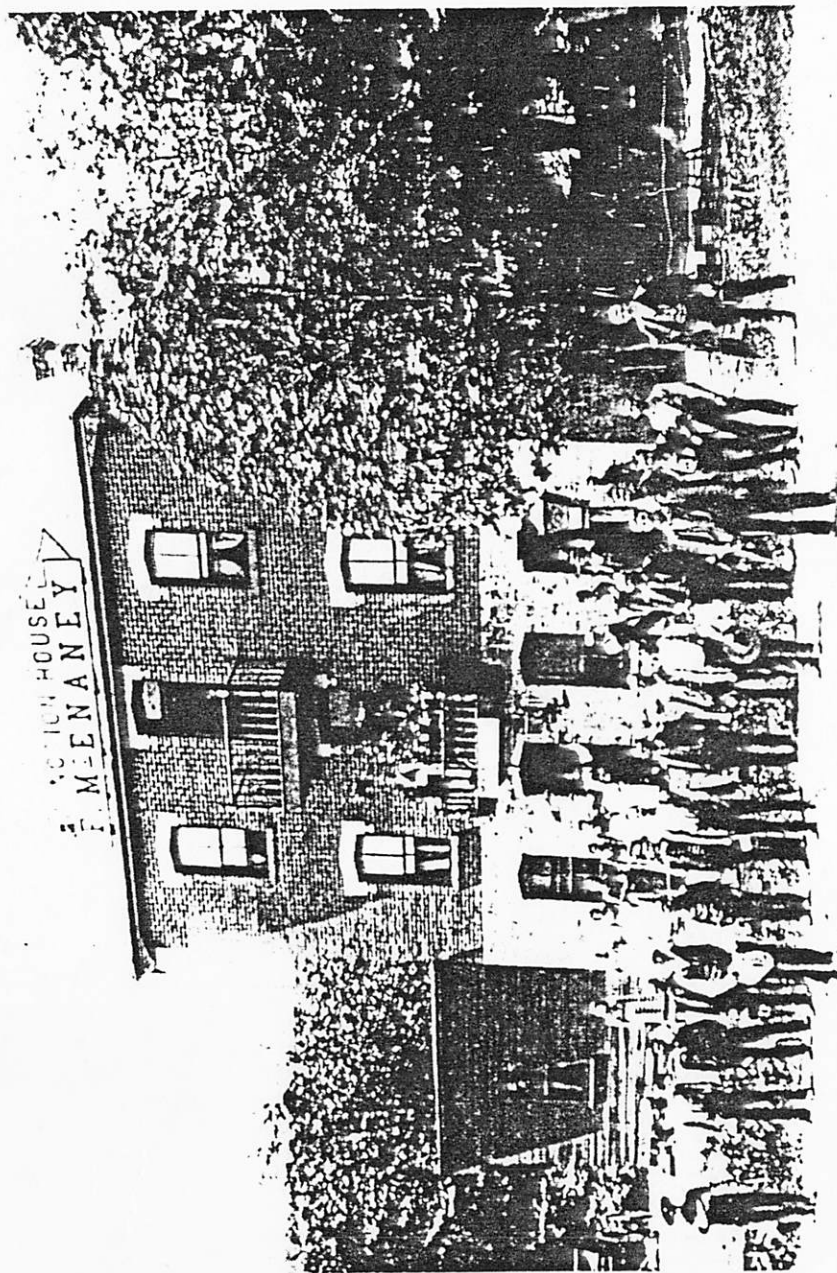
Pat McEnaney was your typically Irish-tempered lad, who on one occasion while in his brother's bar, came to discussing the street plan of the village with a local farmer. It seemed that the man was going to fence off land in the village on which some of the original streets had been surveyed but never built. A heated argument ensued and even though the fences went up, Pat had the last say. He was sure that a road could not be blocked off if travelled at least once a year, and with this he hitched up his horse "Brandy" to go for a ride. Using an old town plan, Pat wound his way up and down the farmer's field and every time he encountered a fence it would simply be cut and pushed aside. The two men went to court over this but Pat won out, it eventually becoming a yearly event for him to take the village children for a ride through Cataract's "streets".

The "Junction House" played its important role as Cataract's meeting place, but the most notable single event of its life occurred during the snows of 1883. In that year, two Credit Valley trains were stuck tight by the storm and unable to move. The McEnaneys accommodated both passengers and crew for close to a week. When the bill was presented to the C.V.R., the superintendent told Frank to simply double it as gratitude for the emergency service his hostelry had provided.

The "Junction House" lasted until 1907 when local option in Cataract deprived it of its liquor license. The rowdy Saturday nights were gone, but so was the business. The structure was torn down, the fine red bricks going to Alton for the building of the bakery there, while Frank joined his brothers by hiring out to the C.P.R. as a steam shovel engineer. Little remains to be seen of the Inn's location, although Bruce Trail hikers will be familiar with the spot as it was where the trail crosses the fence behind the C.P.R. depot at the end of the station road. A small pile of rubble and a depression in the hillside are all that is left of this once proud hotel, but it may be monument enough to its years of service that hikers still use a portion of the original cement sidewalk that once led patrons to its door.

Mention is also made of a third hotel, possible owned by the Dwyers and located on the Third Line (Mary Street) opposite the "Horseshoe Inn". During the heyday of the mills, however, a boarding house was located between the C.P.R. tracks on the given road which leads to the river. Annie Church also ran a similar operation on Church Street, the main road through town. These boarding houses were essential for the housing of the mill hands and although they never received the acclaim of the prestigious hotels, they certainly served Cataract with equal importance.

All rural communities of the 19th century possessed churches, Cataract being no exception and at one time able to support three. As the labourers in the mills were predominantly Irish Catholic, St. Patrick's was perhaps the best established in town. The land for this diminutive brick building on Thomas Street was



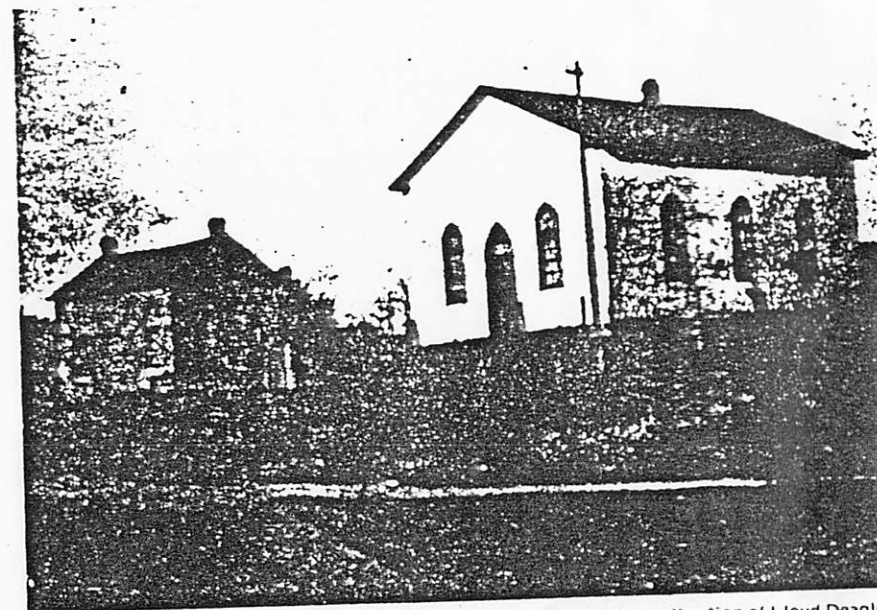
— from the collection of Vincent McEnaney

The Junction House, 1890.  
Frank McEnaney appears in the doorway.



— from the collection of Vincent McEnaney

St. Patrick's Catholic Church,  
Cataract - 1920's.



— from the collection of Lloyd Deagle

The Methodist Church.  
Road leading to the river is seen  
branching from Church St.  
in the foreground.

purchased from Anne McEnaney for \$25.00 in 1890. It saw continuous use, parishioners travelling all the way from Erin to attend Mass. With the decline in population, services became intermittent in later years and were eventually discontinued. The building now serves as a private dwelling.

The second church of Cataract was that of the Methodists, or rather the Scot teetotalers of the community. It was situated adjacent to the "Horseshoe Inn" on the opposite side of John Street, which is still barely discernable as branching from the main road. Mrs. Deagle was the organist for the church and was never hesitant to begin the closing hymn should the speaker become too long-winded. Services were suspended by the 1920's, and although used as a private dwelling, it eventually fell to decay and was razed.

The Anglican Church of Canada at one time had a mission stationed in Charleston (Caledon), the duties of the preacher there being to ride the circuit through Cataract. These services lasted only the short time from 1876 to 1880. Until the construction of the permanent buildings in the 1890's, religious meetings were held in private homes of local residents.

Cataract's school was officially "S.S.No. 14" and was located on the north side of Highway 24 near the road's overpass with the C.P.R. tracks and the Credit River. The land was purchased from the Coulters in 1879 for \$50, and a small brick schoolhouse was erected. Perhaps its most achieved student was Miss Marion Cameron who won an essay contest for all of Canada and was awarded \$500 for writing a letter to the Queen. Literary meetings were also held at the schoolhouse in 1902 and often developed into heated discussions with the guest lecturers. As is the case of most rural institutions, the population declined and forced the closing of the school in 1964. The building was given a reprieve however, and still exists as a private home.

## *Industry*

The driving force that led to the settlement of the Cataract and Credit Forks areas was not farming as it is to-day. Rather, it was the pull of the river on early industry due to the Credit's potential as a power source in an age before the portable steam or internal combustion engine.

Perhaps the first utilization of the valley, outside of hunting and fishing activities, was in the production of wood and timber products. In the late 1840's, the northern reaches of Peel were scanned for cherrywood, the best native wood available for furniture and cabinet work. White pine also abounded near the Forks, these trees supplying a great deal of lumber for the first mills and dwellings, at least until the decimation of that species on the Credit.

Even so, the manufacturing industry was not really launched until the arrival of Church at Cataract Falls in the 1850's. Through his efforts, not only was the town of Church's Falls established, but also the industry that was designed to augment agricultural production. Although Church was by no means the only mill owner on the Credit and most of his holdings were sold to others by the 1880's, it was certainly he who gave the region its start.

We shall organize the discussion of the various industries by moving down the valley from Cataract to the Forks. Doing this, it is found that Bell's Flour Mill was the most northerly operation to be influenced by the town of Cataract. Founded in 1877 by James Bell, the mill ran successfully until the floods of 1912 wiped out the dam. The location of the building was almost directly under the present Highway 24 overpass, the road of the early years curving downstream and crossing under the C.P.R. tracks. Portions of this road may be easily detected from the bridge near Cataract School. While this mill lay a good distance out of town, it was the last on the river before the various mills at Alton.

## *Church's Holdings*

Continuing downstream, the holdings of Richard Church in Cataract itself give one an idea of the hopes this man had for the town. Right from the start, a saw mill, woollen mill and grist mill were put into operation. Also founded by the 1860's were a stave and barrel plant, broom factory and a brewery. These last three enterprises folded very shortly, the brewery being closed by 1865.

The first three businesses did manage to take hold although they were purchased and operated by other individuals well before Church's death in 1893. The woollen mill was located beside the river where it is crossed by the given road which continues on up the hill along the Bruce Trail. It was sold to a man by the name of Ingram in the 1860's, who in turn rented it out to Benjamin Ward. Two of



Ward's daughters married men by the names of Dods and Algie respectively, Benjamin Ward eventually selling and setting these men up in the woollen industry at Alton. Joseph Atkinson was the purchaser of the Cataract mill, but the competition with Alton proved to be too great. The machinery was removed, the building was left to decay, and eventually burned in 1905. Ward's fine house between the river and the railway lasted until the turn of the century when it also was torn down. Nothing remains at the site but a trace of the dam and clearings where the mill and house once stood.

Crook's sawmill at the brink of Cataract Falls soon became a hive of activity as it was one of the first mills to be put into operation by Church, due to the urgent need for lumber. It was quickly thereafter modified into a flour and grist mill, and eventually was sold to Wheeler Bros. and Brown in 1880. The wooden version of this mill burned the following year, and while Brown backed out of the partnership, the Wheeler Bros. rebuilt in grand style. Stone for the new structure was quarried from directly beneath the falls, creating the cave-like hollow that exists to-day beneath the veil of water. During the construction, two men were killed when a man named Scott prematurely lit a fuse during blasting. At any rate, the new building was finally completed, comprised of three storeys of quarried stone that still form the main body of the ruins. The mill burned again in 1885 when it was sold to John Deagle. As his operations were the most unique and long-lived of any in the valley, they will be discussed in more detail later.

## McLaughlin

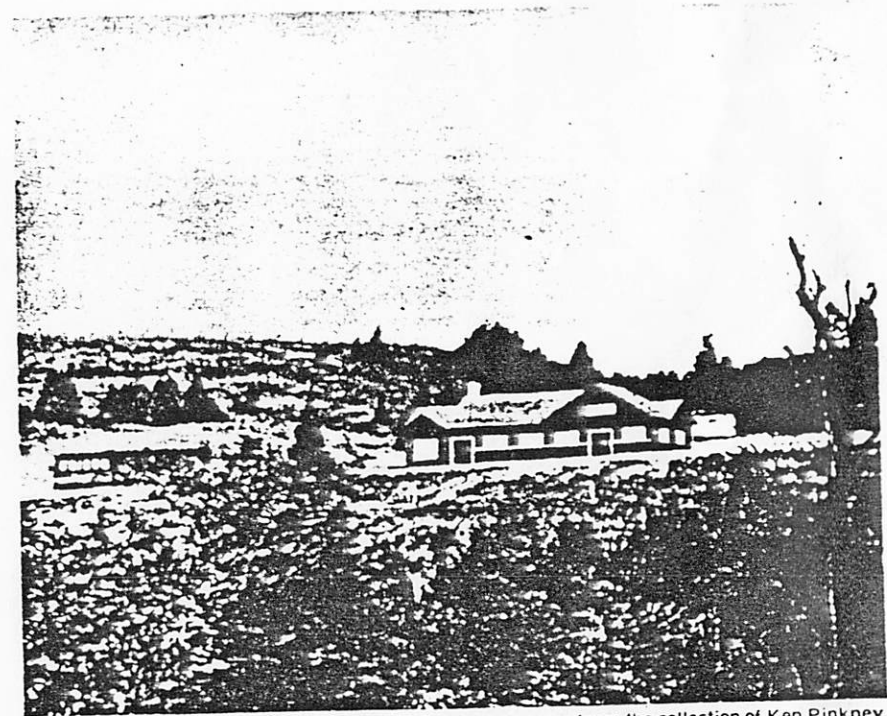
Moving downstream, the next major industry may be said to have been the bottling works of J. J. McLaughlin. If you walk down the C.P.R. tracks from Cataract towards the Forks, it was located on the right hand side a mile out of town near the Cataract yard limit sign. McLaughlin had been bottling soft drinks in Toronto during the 1880's but water in the city soon proved to be unsuitable for his needs. The layers of compact clay marls in the Credit valley created many springs that flowed from high on the hillsides, one of these being chosen as the supply source for his business.

A small frame building was erected in 1911 in which the 5 and 10 gallon jugs would be washed, filled with the clear spring water, and shipped down to Toronto by rail. Originally, the operation was known as "White Mountain Spring Water" although many bottle caps have been found bearing the logo "J.J. McLaughlin-Hygeia Waters". Billy Scott was the plant foreman for most of its life and although he was one of the village fighters, actually taught Sunday school at one time.

Charles Forbes worked at the plant during his summer vacations from school in the year 1910. He recalls that while Billy Scott was a hot-tempered man, he

proved to be a fair boss. On one occasion, an inspection trip was to be made by company officials. Even though the day's work had been completed, Scott told Charley and another employee to look busy at least while the train carrying the brass went by. The plan was to wheel a trolley full of bottles at top speed into a boxcar sitting on the plant siding. The train was heard approaching and at the opportune moment the lads rushed forward with the cart, but were unfortunately unable to stop. They entered the boxcar at full tilt and sent the trolley right out the other side, smashing countless bottles on the C.P.R. tracks. McLaughlin had observed the entire proceedings from the vestibule of the rear car and even though the boys had time to clean up the mess before the train arrived in Cataract, it would have been interesting to hear what Scott had to say when the officials arrived at the plant by buggy.

The bottling works were closed in the 1920's as tanker trucks superseded the shipment of water by rail. At the time, McLaughlin developed a new beverage that is now known nationally as "Canada Dry Ginger Ale". The building was razed in the 1950's and the railway siding torn out, but Canada Dry trucks are still seen making occasional trips to the spring when emergency water is needed.



— from the collection of Ken Pinkney

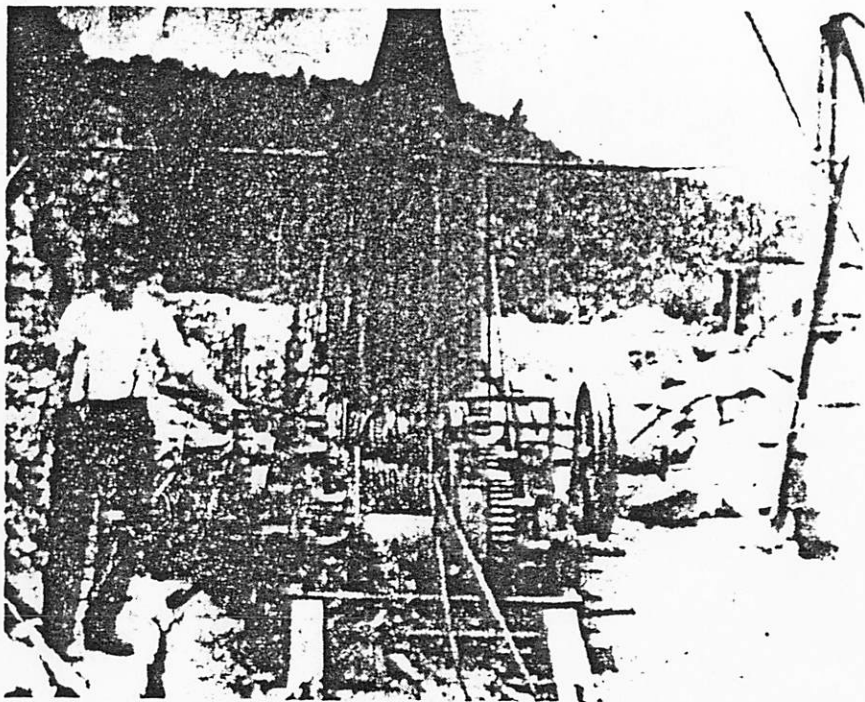
McLaughlin's Bottling Works, 1913.  
A railway car waits on the siding to be loaded with the 5 gallon jugs of water.

## Quarries

Forks of the Credit had always been an industrial centre in the 1870's due to the two branches of the Credit which met there. Price's dam and sawmill was probably the first such operation, being located almost directly below the present C.P.R. trestle. Many similar facilities line the river but the advance of the railways enabled the exploitation of the Forks' true resource, the quarries.

Great quantities of limestone, sandstone and freestone exist at the Forks, and due to their hardness and purity are among the best in Ontario. By the 1880's the valley had assumed the appearance of a western mining town. Over 400 men were employed by the quarries, the unskilled quarrymen living in Brimstone and the Forks while the stonecutters or skilled tradesmen lived in Belfountain and commuted each day by wagon. Blocks ranging from 8 to 9 tons each would be blasted out, dressed by the stonecutters and transported to the railway. The peak period of operations came in 1886 when construction of the Ontario Parliament building was begun. All the exterior stonework for that structure, the Toronto City Hall and many University of Toronto buildings came from the Forks of the Credit.

The quarries changed ownership and locations many times and are therefore



— from the collection of Edgar Ireland

Stationary steam engine that powered the aerial tram of Big Hill Quarry.  
Circa 1890.

difficult to trace, although there existed primarily three groups of operations. These roughly existed in the triangle formed by the main section and two branches of the river. All quarrying methods were similar, but the procedures of transporting the rock to the railroad are the distinguishing features of each operation.

Near the town of Brimstone, the "Big Hill" quarry was owned originally by K. Chisholm and then by John McKnight, and used an overhead tramway to transport the immense blocks of stone. A two inch cable supported the main weight and extended the full width of the valley, while a smaller cable attached to a steam operated drum hauled the stone across. The rock would then be lowered onto flatcars waiting on the siding above the Forks of the Credit station. A story has been told of a lad by the name of Bert Tuck who walked the cable in the early 1900's. He performed the feat on a wager and apparently collected.

The Forks Quarries were numbered one through four and extended along the main wall of the valley, adjacent to the C.P.R. tracks. Sidings were built to the base of the escarpment but the rock had to be handled down the hill. To accomplish this, a miniature single-tracked tramway was constructed up the face of the incline. A passing track was built at the midway mark where the two cars met, the system being entirely gravity powered. By means of pulleys, the loaded cart would simply pull the empty one back up the hill! Remains of the cables and diminutive rails may still be seen strewn among the unused rocks, just to the right of where the Bruce Trail crosses the railroad tracks and climbs the hillside.

The third complex of operations were known as the "Crow's Nest" quarries and lay on the Belfountain branch of the Credit one half mile from the Forks. At one time, a railway siding ran from behind the C.P.R. depot, crossed the Forks Road directly at the hairpin turn, and wound its way up the valley. The face of this quarry is the most easily recognizable of the three as unused rock litters the ground where the loading onto the railway cars took place. The best route to the spot is to follow the abandoned railroad grade. Two unused bridge abutments of quarried stone lay less than 100 yards from the road and point the way to the site.

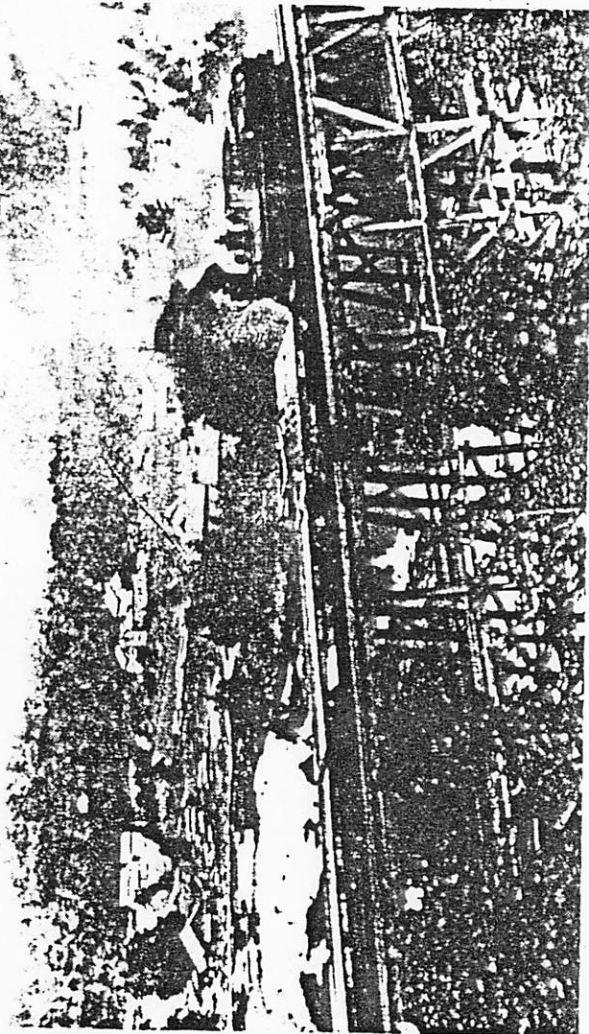
The blocks of stone were not the only attraction to the quarrymen at the Forks, for large deposits of clay led to the forming of the "Credit Forks Tile and Brick Company". Their major building was located in a hollow just north of the Forks station on the land of the present Caledon Ski Club. The quarries had begun to decline in the 1900's due to the use of concrete as a building material, but J. McKnight's brickworks managed to keep the area open at least until 1925. A dam was built on the Belfountain branch of the Credit just above the Crow's Nest quarries for the purpose of supplying power to a projected china and plate factory, although the clay proved too inferior to be utilized for such a product. The machinery was long housed in the old store and post office upstream from the C.P.R. trestle, but was eventually sold and moved out. The dam still remains, the lake it forms making an excellent picnic spot for those willing to hike through the bush half the distance to Belfountain.

Another project at the Forks was the construction of a very substantial lime-kiln near Forks quarry no. 3. The limestone would be baked to obtain the lime and close to 15 ovens were contained in the quarried stone building. The business gradually declined however, although the building was never torn down. Today it is completely hidden in the bush, accessible only to those who know where to look. It is amazing how such a large building, complete with the remains of its huge



chimney, can be so completely hidden from view. Again, Bruce Trail hikers have to detour in order to visit the kiln as it lies to the west of where the trail climbs the hillside.

At best, the industry of the valley lasted only until the 1920's. As building materials, concrete and cement replaced the sandstone and freestones of the quarries, creating the downfall of what had been the only "tunnel" form of quarrying in Canada. The portable power source of the steam engine also enabled the construction of factories closer to the markets, thereby freeing producers from the chains of riverside locations. One Credit valley miller did see progress's handwriting on the wall though, for he changed with the times and created the longest-lived mill in the valley. Returning to Cataract, to the site of the Wheeler Bros.' burnt-out flour mill on the brink of Cataract Falls, we now look at the efforts of John Martin Deagle.



— Public Archives of Ontario

An 1886 view of Forks of the Credit. Bridge of Dominion Road to Cataract crosses the Credit at the left of centre. Fork's Quarries nos. 2 & 3 are in the background at the right. The C.P.R. engine is shunting cars to be loaded with stone from the aerial tramway, out of the picture to the left.

## *John Deagle and "The Cataract Electric Company"*

The Deagles were long involved in milling concerns before their arrival at Cataract, John Martin Deagle owning a mill on Fairchild's Creek near Brantford. The water power at this site was very limited, however. With this, John set out on his bicycle and covered over 1,000 miles of southern Ontario, resulting in his relocation at Cataract.

Backed by his father and joined in partnership by his brother Leamon, John purchased the charred remains of the Wheeler Bros.' mill for \$1,800 and had it rebuilt to its former five storeys. A warehouse for the loading of grain was built across the river to a C.P.R. siding while a small office, complete with a Great North Western telegraph key for business communications, was added up the hill. Business proved to be as bad for the Deagles as it had been for their predecessors, there just was not enough business for all the mills that existed between Alton and the Forks. For a time it seemed that John's knowledge of mechanics and engineering had held more sway for his choice of the Cataract location than his economic reasoning. He had been toying with electricity, reading books and articles on the subject in his spare time, and the installation of his first generator was to change his fortunes overnight.

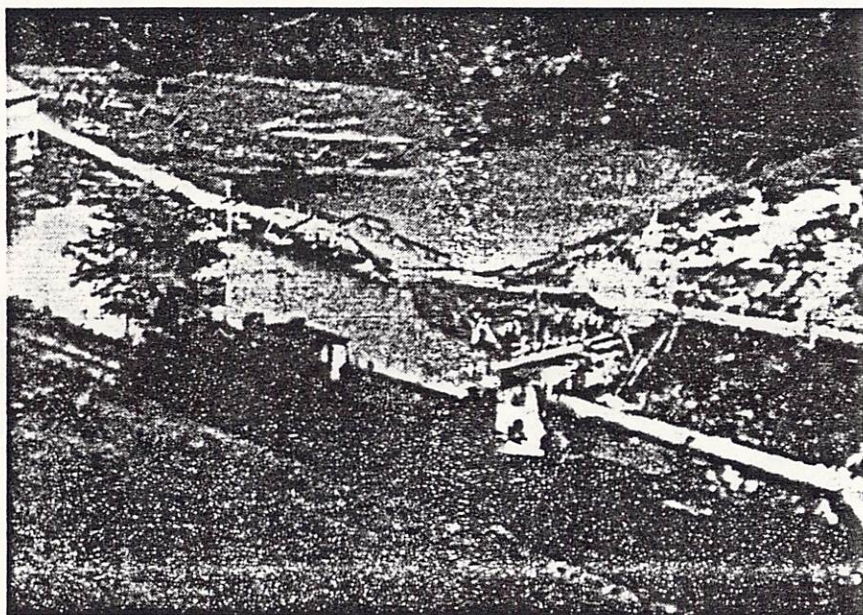
This first generator was a Royal Electric, S.K.C. model, 133 cycle, single phase unit. Having a revolving armature (meaning that the high voltage wires revolved on a drum while the magnets remained stationary) it was obviously a very crude affair with many kinks to be ironed out. Binding wires on the drum would fly off, revolving the high voltage wires made it difficult to keep up insulation, and the constant burnouts due to lightning and shorts soon made the Deagles experts at rewinding armatures. Still, it was electricity and Cataract's streets soon blossomed with three experimental lights, courtesy of John Deagle.

Even though Leamon fell ill at this time, leaving John with the sole responsibility of the mill, Erin was approached with a plan for the lighting of that town. The hydro portion of the plant was extremely makeshift as the generator was located in the office and connected with the main building down the hill by a series of thresher belts. Still, the first power was generated over the five miles of line on November 2, 1899.

Deagle was eager to induce private users to become customers of his plant but "turn of the century" townspeople were not overly receptive to the idea of electric power. Finally, a small hotel in town was persuaded to install a fixture in their sample room. As Deagle's rates were 1c per night per bulb and three days elapsed before additional customers were obtained, those first three days of operation netted him exactly three cents. Customers eventually did come and on a dusk-till-dawn basis the revenues for the first year totalled \$500. It is noteworthy that in negotiating the right of way for the lines through the property of Laughlin (Lot 15, Concession V, Caledon), that this became the first electrically lit farm in Ontario.

Those early carbon filament bulbs threw off no more light than the standard coal oil lamps but it was their cleanliness and ease of operation that was to make





— from the collection of Lloyd Deagle

Deagle's reservoir prior to 1912.  
The Dominion Road's bridge crosses the lake as the dam is  
located downstream.  
C.P.R. locomotives are on the low or main line.

them superior, a point that Deagle stressed in his many sales pitches. Now operating at a profit and as is the case of all successful businessmen, Deagle's next customer approached him. In 1902 a committee arrived by carriage from Orangeville. By the time they left for home, a 5 year contract with a 25 year option had been drawn up for the lighting of that town. Orangeville wanted connection within three years but John managed to hold them off as many improvements had to be made. Flour milling operations were suspended indefinitely, the title of the mill being reorganized in 1905 to read "THE CATARACT ELECTRIC CO. LTD.". Lines were strung as far as Alton in 1904, the dam and reservoir were reinforced, but it was at the plant itself that most of the improvements occurred.

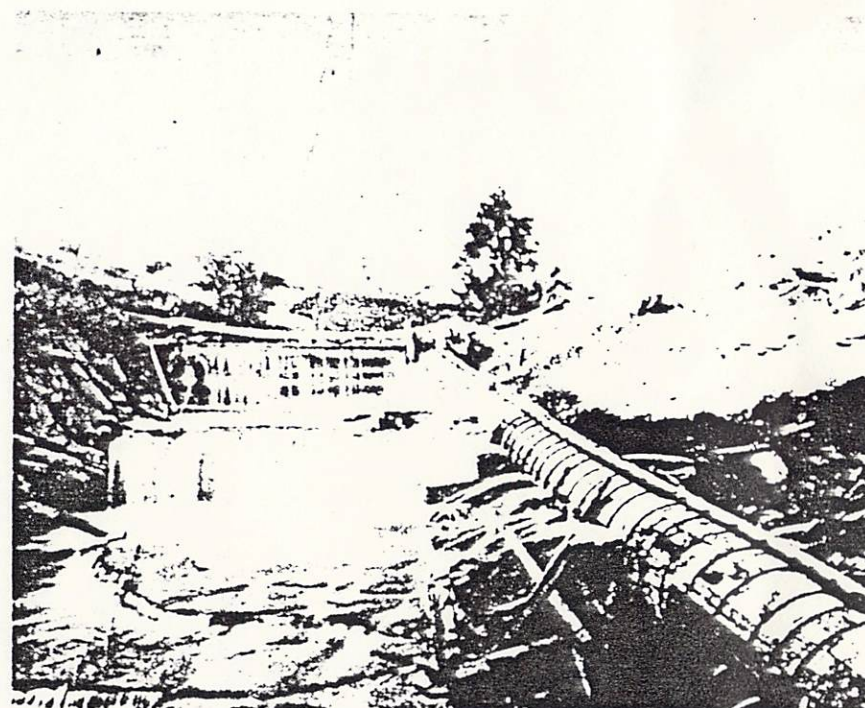
The flaws of the old generator have been mentioned, but it had proved capable of serving Erin and Alton. With the addition of Orangeville to the system, a much more reliable unit had to be obtained. Deagle undertook his most ingenious project to meet this end, the designing of an entirely new generator. John had been reading about the principles of a new revolving field unit in lieu of the old revolving armature. With this knowledge he successfully designed and built the first operating model in Canada. All patterns and work were accomplished in the small attic shop of the mill and for those interested in such things, dimensions were made in the metric system due to the ease in calculation. This is a step not taken by Great Britain until recently and still not adopted by Canada to-day!

With these improvements, operations to Orangeville were started within four

years, but a rival was found in the form of C.W. Watson's steam operated plant in town. Cut-throat competition emerged, while the customers themselves often complicated matters. On many occasions, the bill owing to one company would not be paid. When service was discontinued, the customer would simply call upon the other company to have their system installed. Until grievances between the two power suppliers were ironed out, many homes contained outlets for both.

Business flourished for Deagle despite the rivalry, whereupon he entertained a scheme for the expansion of the plant. Alf Roberts, a quarry operator at the Forks, was engaged to build a tunnel from the lake at Cataract through the hillside to an outlet near Brimstone. With this tunnel the drop in elevation would be increased from 68' to 168', roughly doubling the energy of each cubic foot of water. Over 350' of the 700' tunnel was constructed and still exists inside the hill due to its strong concrete lining, but the project had to be abandoned because of a natural disaster that affected all the mills on the Credit.

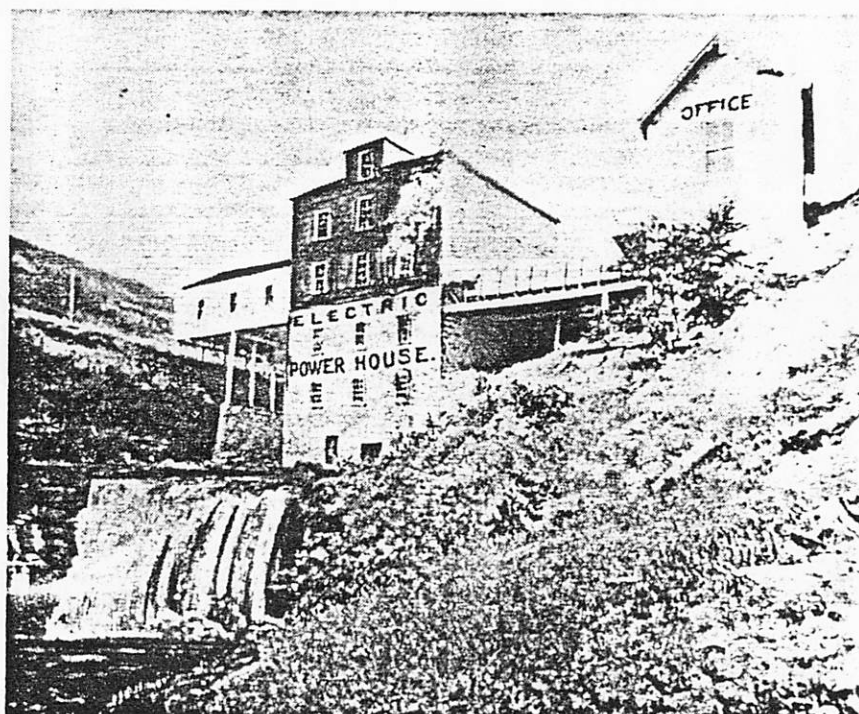
The floods of April 6 & 7, 1912 were perhaps the most severe ever recorded from the point of damage estimates. Mountains of ice piled against the dams of the area due to unusually warm weather and rain greatly increasing the flow of water beneath. The bursting of the Alton and Bell's dams upstream created the surge that entirely wiped out Deagle's dam, penstocks, and even the Dominion Road and



— from the collection of Lloyd Deagle

River-side view of Deagle's wooden dam  
and penstocks.





— from the collection of Lloyd Deagle

Doctored publicity photo showing Deagle's plant while still used for flour milling operations. Note the office, main plant, and warehouse extending across the river.

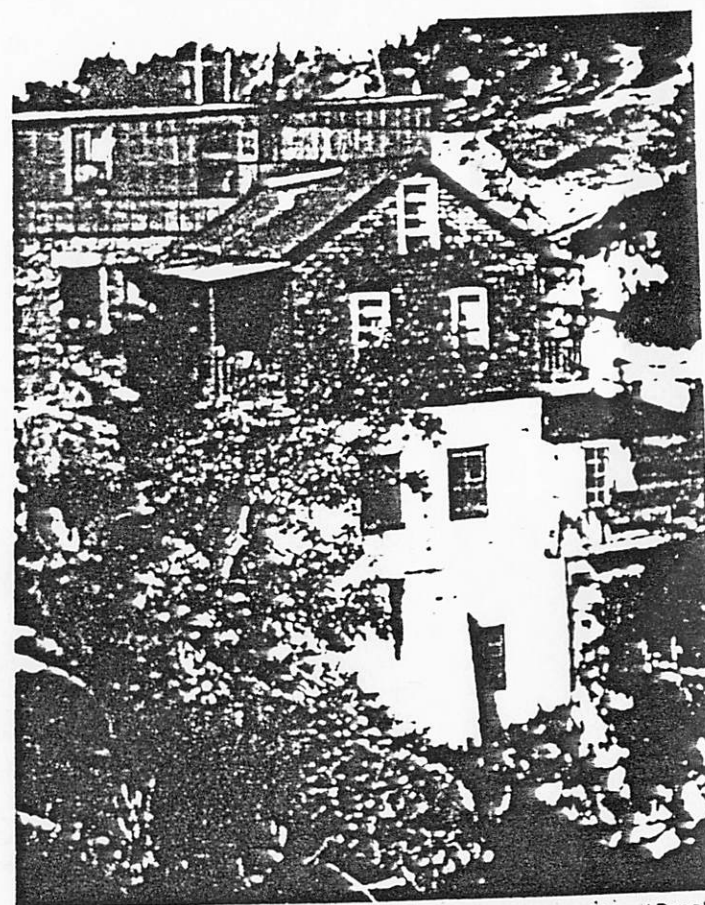
bridge. The road was never replaced and is now only negotiable by foot at the Cataract end. Great expense was incurred and all available resources were shifted from the projected tunnel to the resuming of normal operations. The dam was replaced, this time upstream where the Dominion Road bridge had stood. It was also reinforced against future breakups with actual railroad tracks within the concrete forms.

Deagle was still in need of expansion in order to meet demand, but a more moderate scheme was finally effected with the completion of the southern addition to the mill in 1915. An entirely new flume and water wheel system was designed by him and although no boiler makers were available to caulk and rivet the  $\frac{3}{4}$ " steel castings, it was found that the skills necessary for the job were already possessed by the stone cutters in the nearby quarries. A group of these men were borrowed for a few days, trained by Deagle, and in no time at all the expanded plant was ready for operation. Deagle was a good teacher and a fair boss but he expected his employees to work. John was often quoted as saying that he would never hire a man who either smoked or wore a belt. The reasons? "They're always rolling cigarettes or pulling up their pants"!

Operations moved along rather uneventfully until 1923 when John and his son

Lloyd (who was by then secretary of the company) decided to sell. An offer of \$25,000. was made by Toronto Hydro engineer T.C. James but was rejected as being far too low. Eventually a buyer was found in the person of R.G. Lee who purchased the operations for \$50,000.

Lee undertook an expansion of the lines but the increase was much too fast for his finances. In bankruptcy, he sold out to Harris Bros. and Overland in 1925 who re-named the company "Caledon Electric Company". Extensions of service were gradually constructed to Hillsburgh, Caledon, Caledon East and Cheltenham Brickworks via Inglewood and the Forks, but it was during their tenure that water shortages were first felt. This necessitated the installation of costly diesel motors as the clearing of the forests to the north had completely altered the water table. A manually read hydro-metric gauge had been in operation at Cataract since May of



— from the collection of Lloyd Deagle

Cataract Electric Co.'s plant at Cataract Falls after the 1915 addition. Note the Deagle family's residence built directly above the new section.



— from the collection of Lloyd Deagle

John Deagle with his newly completed dam, 1912.

1915 and it was found that the average water flow was in the 35 to 40 cu. ft. per sec. range. In the last years, Lloyd Deagle had seen spring run-offs of over 5,000 cu. ft. per sec. mostly being wasted over the falls, with the flow the following summers being as low as 5 cu. ft. per sec. on certain days. The latter was certainly not sufficient for the operation of the plant on a 24-hour basis.

The overhead of diesel power was much too high even with the increased business. Parts were also difficult to obtain during the War. This resulted in the sale of the plant to Ontario Hydro in 1944 for a reputed \$100,000. It is interesting to note that this amount was paid only for the lines and rights-of-way, the mill itself being thrown in for free as part of the deal. Hydro continued to operate the Cataract plant until 1947 when alternate outside connections were completed. The machinery was removed, one of the diesels going to Kagawong on Manitoulin Island to serve as auxilliary power, but the initial plan was to preserve little Cataract Lake as a tourist area. The C.P.R. objected to this proposal and, for fear

that a washout would damage their already mushy tracks near the falls, called for the refurbishing of the dam. The cost of repairs was estimated at over \$50,000, including the construction of a new retaining wall. This was far too great an expenditure for a non-functioning operation and the dam was ignominiously dynamited in 1953. Cataract Lake, the gem of the village, disintegrated down the valley.

Today the remains of the mill are one of the most prominent relics of the area's bustling past. It is unfortunate that so many accidents and deaths have been associated with negligence by hikers at the falls of late, for in 50 years only one death was directly related to the operation of the plant. On February 12, 1917, the lines of the Pine River Light and Power Company (successor to Deagle's old Orangeville rival) accidentally arched to their own private phone line, melting every telephone along its entire length. Where these lines and Deagle's crossed in Orangeville they also arched, sending the increased voltage down to Cataract in a ball of fire. W. J. Gibson, the operator that night, grabbed a pair of pliers with the idea of cutting the lines where they entered the plant through the attic. He was electrocuted in the attempt. Had he possessed the foresight to wear rubber gloves and boots, or even cut the lines with the sharp blow of an axe, the accident would have been prevented.

The Cataract Electric Company was typical of the enterprising natures of pioneer power producers in Ontario. The battle was fought on both the technical and economic fronts by these companies in order to overcome the early difficulties, resulting in the Ontario Hydro of to-day. In close to 50 years of service few interruptions were ever experienced by Cataract power subscribers, an enviable record for a handful of men sweating to keep a plant alive twenty-four hours a day. Little remains at the Cataract falls of John Deagle's efforts, but his contribution to both the hydro power industry and the northern Credit region was one of the most valuable in both regards.



## From Roads to Railroads

From the beginning of settlement, Caledon had its system of sideroads and concessions surveyed through the township, Hurontario Street (Hwy. 10) emerging as the major thoroughfare. An interesting road once linked the villages of Cataract and the Forks, however, taking a much more direct route than the present access past the Caledon Ski Club.

It is unknown when the Dominion Road was first built, but it was probably opened by the 1850's. Originally, it ran through the valley on the Credit's right bank. The engineers who surveyed the railway's route in the 1870's decided that this would also be the best route for the rail line due to the excessive curvature of the left bank. Consequently, the Dominion Road was relocated to the other side of the valley in 1879, while the present C.P.R. tracks occupy its original site. Due to the relocation, the road travelled through the town of Brimstone before winding its way up the valley. At the Cataract end, it passed the power plant at the falls and crossed the reservoir on a wooden bridge before meeting the given road or Third Line.

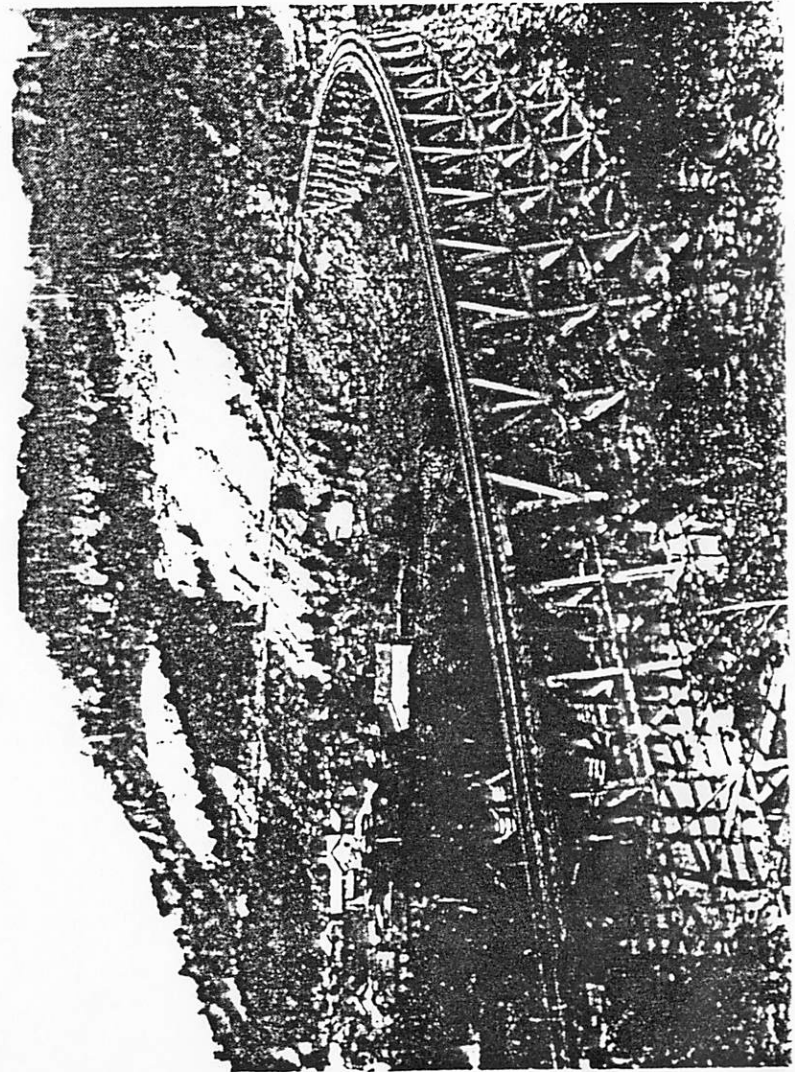
The term "Given Road" is one that may be applied to many backroads in the valley. These roads were theoretically planned on a north-south grid section, but as often occurred, obstacles such as the valley prevented strict adherence to the pattern. Where such natural obstructions occurred, the road would then be detoured in the most practical manner for the situation. This required that the owners of adjacent lots "give" or donate a portion of their land, resulting in the term. The Third Line at Cataract is such a road. On a map it is noted that this line is perfectly straight with the exception of its torturous route over the tracks and across the river.

Returning to the Dominion Road, it is found that it by no means followed any grid pattern and perhaps evolved from a mere Indian trail through the bush due to its constant use. The last four wheeled vehicle to pass over the road was an old Model T Ford that carried Charles Forbes from Brimstone to Cataract. This was on the night of April 6, 1912, already mentioned as being the time of the great floods. The road was entirely wiped out at the Cataract end and never rebuilt due to lack of use. To-day, it may be negotiated from the Brimstone end as far as the campgrounds, where it fades to a mere footpath. Perhaps if a park or greenbelt is made of the valley, the Dominion Road will be re-opened for automobile traffic.

A much greater and influential mode of transportation arrived in the valley in the form of the Credit Valley Railway. Completed in 1879, the line extended from Toronto to Streetsville where it then branched west to St. Thomas and north to Orangeville. As the company's title suggests, the Orangeville branch was considered the mainline at that time.

The most impressive scenery of the railroad was undoubtedly in the Cataract and Forks area. It is no wonder, then, that the road's most impressive structure should lay in the valley at the Forks. Just above the meeting of the Credit's branches, a 1146 foot long and 85 foot high timber trestle was constructed, the largest to be found in Ontario at that time. The small "Forks of the Credit" station, with its huge roofed-over platform, was situated just at the trestle's north end.

Continuing up river, Cataract was the second major junction point on the line, only Streetsville being larger. It was here that the Elora branch, completed in 1880,



— Public Archives of Ontario

Credit Valley Railway's trestle as it originally appeared. Fork's Quarries nos. 2 & 3 appear in background. Gravity powered tram climbs the hill at the far end of quarry no. 3 near the present Bruce Trail.

leaves the mainline and climbs the valley wall to reach the flats beyond. At one time the junction was a hive of activity with four passenger trains a day on both the branch and mainline, not to mention the immense volume of freight activity in the years before transport trucks and a four lane Highway 10. The turntable pit that once changed the direction of the Elora branch's engines may still be seen by



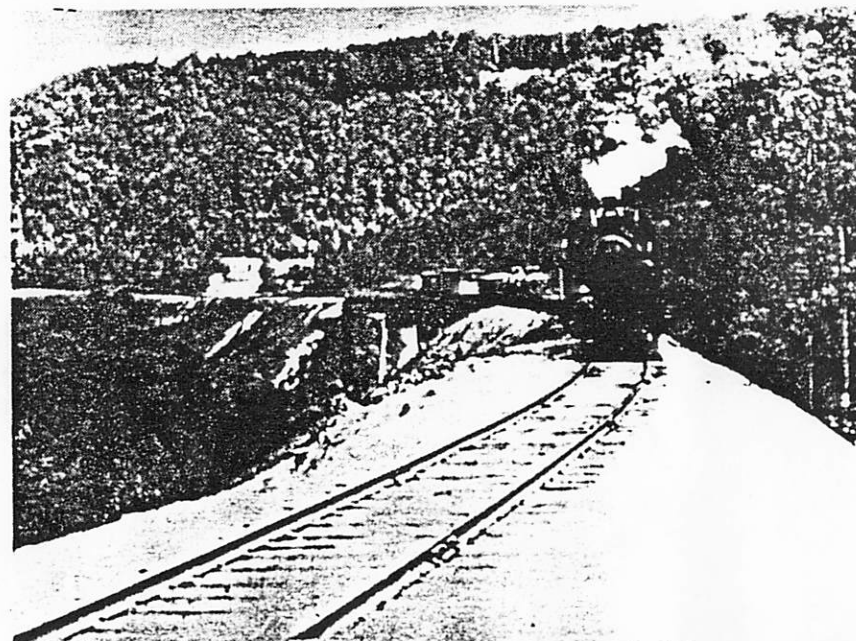
following the lead stub by the station. The Cataract water tower was nestled in an embankment hollow at the north end of the yards, while the reservoir that kept it filled is known to Bruce Trail hikers as the cement-lined pool on the hillside above.

The main backer of the railroad was George Laidlaw who had previously constructed the nearby Toronto, Grey & Bruce. It was originally intended for this line to operate a branch from Mono Road to the Forks but the proposal was abandoned with the forming of the Credit Valley R.R. The Canadian Pacific was searching for a southern Ontario route to compliment its national westward expansion, which led to its purchasing of the Credit Valley in 1884. Due to the construction of the Ontario Parliament building in 1886, the area boomed for the C.P.R. At that time there were no less than 26 railway sidings between Inglewood and Cataract, at present there being a mere and unused four. It was decided that the large trestle should be strengthened to accommodate the increased business. The railway purchased a gravel pit in Cataract and constructed a siding across the river near the station to reach it. A shuttle service was then run between Cataract and the Forks, this train dumping the gravel through the trestle until an embankment was formed. In other words, the original wooden trestle at the Forks



Forks trestle after its 1888 remodeling.  
Forks of the Credit station stands beyond the structure.

— from the collection of Ken Pinkney



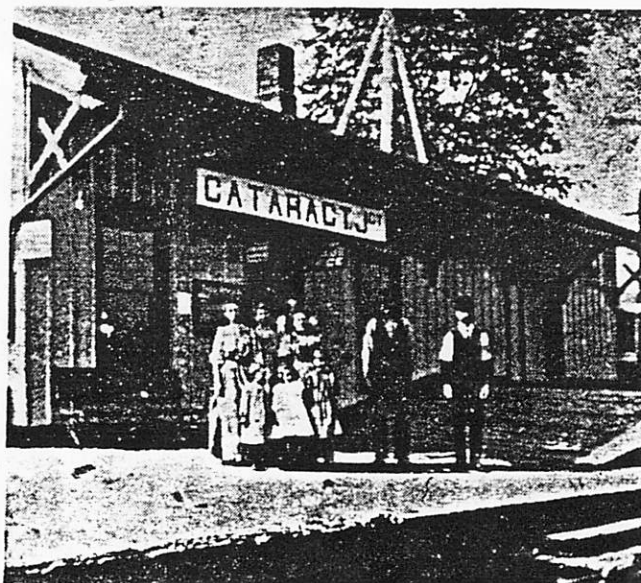
VIEW OF RAILWAY LOOKING EAST, FORKS OF THE CREDIT ONT.

— from the collection of Ken Pinkney

The trestle as it is to-day after the installation of the steel centre portion. Even though the picture dates from the 1940's, the bush has already reclaimed the quarries while the limekiln lies derelict beyond the train at rail level.

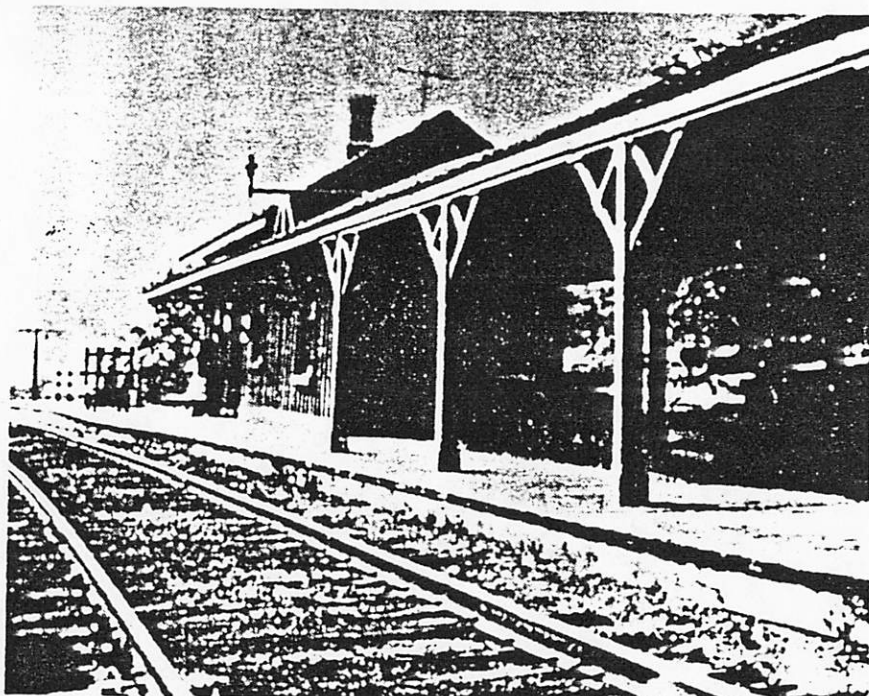
still exists under the tons of earth! The work was completed in 1888, although the centre portion was left until the 1900's when the present steel section was installed.

The railroad, whose coming was heralded by the valley, eventually led to the downfall of villages such as Cataract and the Forks. Local industry could not compete with the factories of Toronto that cheaply shipped products by rail. In turn, the railroad has been replaced by trucks and automobiles as the major form of transportation. Now a lowly branch of the Canadian Pacific, the Orangeville line sees only two freights a day while the Elora branch averages but two a week. The stations at both Cataract and the Forks were closed in 1932, from then on existing only as flagstops for passengers. Even this service has been discontinued, the last "Dayliner" running from Toronto to Orangeville and Owen Sound on Nov. 1, 1970. If a person wishes to travel by rail through the valley, he must ride the special steam-powered excursions to be sponsored by Ontario Rail, a Toronto based rail fan club.



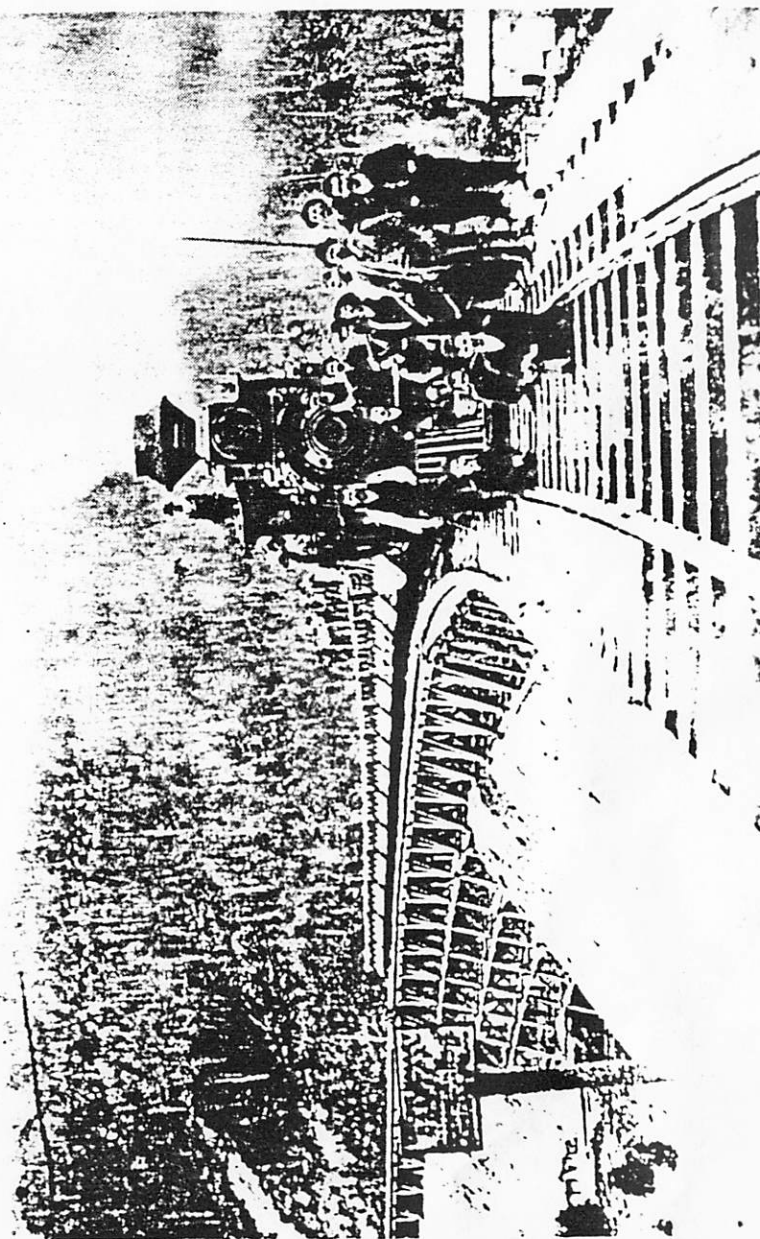
Cataract Junction,  
1890.

— from the collection of Ted Cox



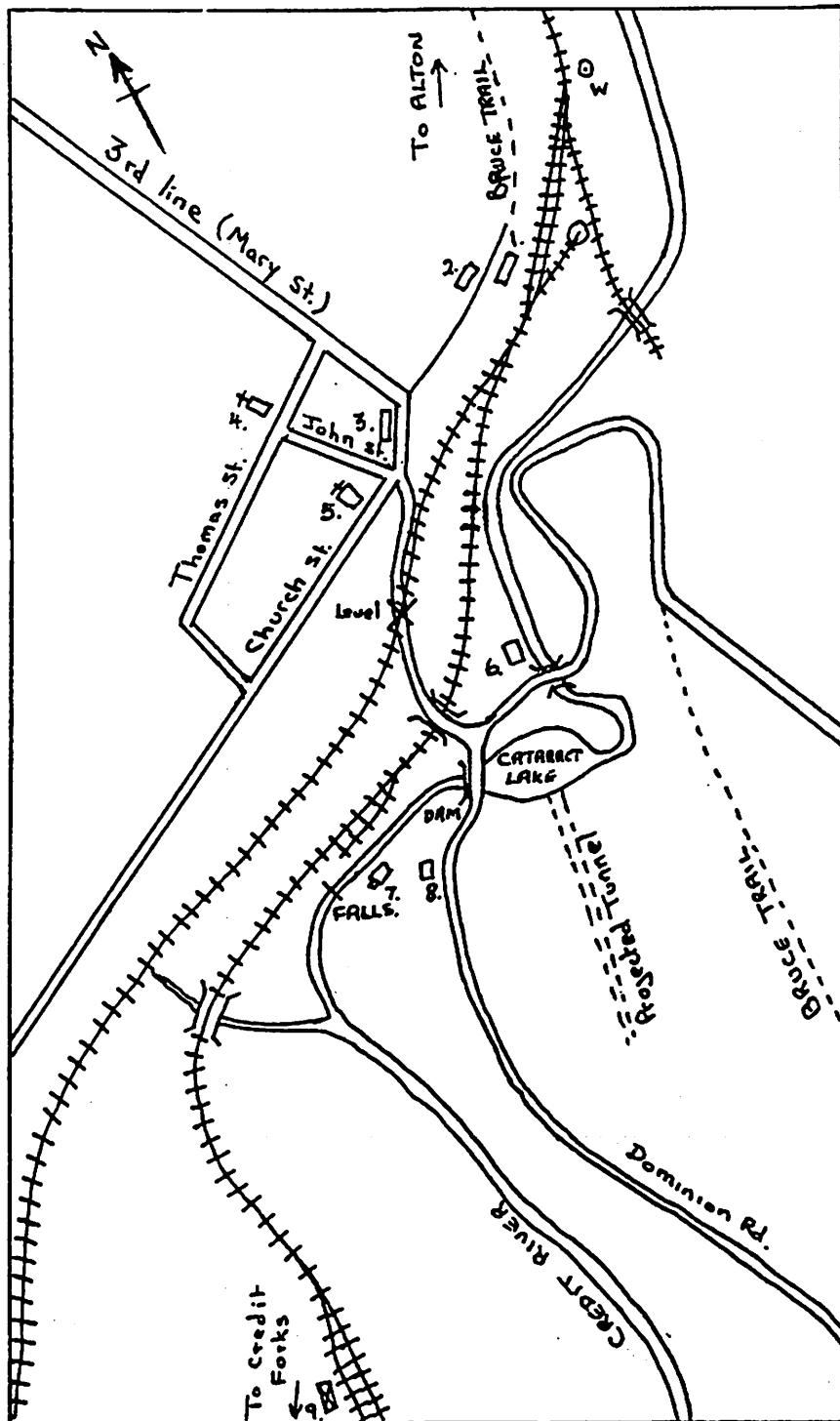
— from the collection of Ken Pinkney

Forks of the Credit station, 1895.  
The trestle is out of the picture to the left, while Forks Road crosses the C.P.R. spur to the Crow's Nest quarry at the hairpin curve directly behind the station.



— from the collection of Vincent McEnaney

Proof that the Forks trestle still exists. C.P.R. locomotive no. 163 heads the work train engaged in making the embankment. A shuttle operation was run from the company's Cataract gravel pit to the Forks, where dirt would simply be dumped between the rails of the trestle until an embankment was built up. Pete McEnaney was the foreman of the crew, and appears as the white shirted figure standing by the engine's pilot.



## Cataract

### LEGEND

1. Railway Depot
2. Junction House
3. Horseshoe Inn
4. St. Patrick's Catholic Church
5. Methodist Church
6. Ward's Woollen Mill
7. Cataract Electric Co. Plant
8. Cataract Electric Co. Office
9. McLaughlin's Bottling Works



## *Conclusions and Observations*

It may now be seen that the Credit Valley has not always possessed the scenic attractions that it does to-day. Rather, the river served as the magnet that attracted industry to a region that could not otherwise have been used agriculturally, due to the steepness of the valley walls and the relatively narrow flood plain. The casual Sunday driver may not realize this fact, for it remains for the hiker to discover the ruins of the Credit's busier days. With this booklet, it is hoped that it will be of service in identifying the features of industry that may be encountered in the valley. Deagle's mill, for instance, is one of the best known and climbed-over relics in the area. It must not be regarded as a mere crumbling ruin, however, for it represents all the years of planning and labour that entailed such an operation. Yet, without examining the flavour of the times in which it was built, the ruins of the mill pass us by as having made little contribution to our present way of life.

Still, the area did change from its industrial economy to a more rural one in the early 1930's. The trees and grass reclaimed the mills and quarries, reverting the area back to its natural state. Perhaps this was the best line of action, as Cataract and the Forks are one of the most popular outing spots in Ontario. The first indication of this trend came in 1901, with the forming of the "Caledon Mountain Trout Club" whose members fished the Credit River just east of the Forks. The number of groups using the area have since expanded to the point where the summer days are alive with Bruce Trail hikers, Boy Scout and countless private and school-based organizations. With the proposed establishment of a Provincial Park within the valley, the Cataract and Forks area will hopefully be of as much value to us as it was to our predecessors.